CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE HISTORY

(Compiled by Carol Hoffman, 2004-2005 CLSC Vice President)

1. ?
2. Mrs. L. B. Dominey
3. ?
4. ?
5. Mrs. Edna Anderson
6. Mrs. Zeke Powell
7. Mrs. Dan Brewer
8. Mrs. Wesley Walton
9. Gertrude Gregg
10. ?
11. Mrs. Thayer
12. Miss Rachel Armstrong
13. Miss Grace Sharpe
14. Mrs. Swap
15. Gertrude Henderson

EARLIEST PROGRAM BOOKLET

Fairbury C. L. S. C.

1909-1910 "I know no disease of the soul but ignorance"

There were four officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

There were four Leaders of Books, four Critics of Books, four Leaders of Magazines, and four Critics of Magazines.

There were four or occasionally five meetings per month except three in December and one in June. They met on Wednesday afternoons at homes of members alphabetically from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Membership was limited to 18.

There was a fine of 10 cents for absence without a good excuse or if a member was tardy more than ten minutes.

This booklet listed charter members and officers from 1895.

OFFICERS FROM 1895 TO 1900

	1895	1896	1897
PRESIDENT	Emily Pence	Phoebe Dominy	Emily Pence
VICE PRESIDENT	Nancy Shankland	Rachel Armstrong	Eliza Powell
SECRETARY	Grace Sharp	Nancy Shankland	Rachel Armstrong
TREASURER	Della Walton	Della Walton	Julia Reckard

	1898	1899	1900
PRESIDENT	Nancy Shankland	Eliza Powell	Della Walton
VICE PRESIDENT	Emma Rogers	Della Walton	Minnie Gregg
SECRETARY	Della Walton	Minnie Gregg	Emily Pence
TREASURER	Phoebe Dominy	Sarah Swap	Emma Babcock

CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE

1959 ANNIVERSARY MEMORIES

By Ann Weber

Anna Weber 1

Sixty-four years ago on November 16, 1895 a group of Fairbury ladies organized a study club known as the Bay View Reading Circle. The purpose of the organization was expressed (and carried out) in the preamble of the Constitution of C. L. S. C. "Seeking knowledge and mental improvement, also a high standard of social intercourse in connection with the routine of daily life, and believing that we can accomplish more in our study and research, and at the same time promote good fellowship by being banded together, we hereby form ourselves into a society."

The founders and first members were: Mrs. Melvin Anderson, Miss Rachel Armstrong, Mrs. Dan Brewer, Mrs. L. B. Dominy, Miss Gertrude Gregg, Miss Grace Patterson (Fairbury teacher), Mrs. J. J. Pence, Mrs. E. D. Powell, Mrs. Presler, Mrs. J. A. Reckard, Mrs. B. F. Shankland, Miss Grace Sharp, Mrs. A. J. Swap, Mrs. G. 0. Thayer, Mrs. J. W. Walton. The only remaining charter member is Miss Rachel Armstrong, who now lives in a nursing home in Arrowsmith, Illinois, and on December 11 was 96 years of age.

When the first great project for adult education, known as the Chautauqua movement captured this country, the club adopted the Chautauqua reading program. This program specified that four books each year from the fields of history, art, literature, and science together with a monthly magazine on important topics with questions in the back of the magazine, had to be carefully studied. If a member answered these questions on the books and magazines to the satisfaction of C. L. S. C. Headquarters, she received a diploma. This was a four-year course, and those who passed the test were allowed to pass through the Golden Gate at Chautauqua, N. Y. at commencement time.

Mrs. Lillie McDowell, later Mrs. Frank Churchill, aunt of our Mrs. Henderson and Miss Jessie Dominy, later Mrs. Herbert Powell, were two from Fairbury who attended and passed through the Golden Gate.

Each book was an important and interesting topic. I think the one that made the deepest imprint on me was the one on astronomy, which gave me a relation of personal friendship with the stars and instilled in me the awe of God's great work. How year after year on the exact time and date each star is in its proper place, how computations are made and Easter dated many years ahead by the infallibility of the stars and moon and heavenly bodies and the flawless work of our Creator. After a number of years this program was given up, and a program committee directed the study.

Through the years the club has adhered to the standards of mental improvement and wholesome social and cultural intercourse, but adherence to these standards has not kept C. L. S. C. from being a very comfortable and understanding group.

We have had many delightful anniversary parties and gatherings which still live in our memories. For many years we did not serve any refreshments at our meetings. Serving has been done only the past few years, but adds to the social life.

Roll call has proven an interesting item as it creates new interests in various topics, making us more alert to them. All our programs have been interesting for they are so varied and well presented and our hostess always makes us have a desire to come back again.

We have lost some members who have moved from our midst, but we think that all have felt as Mrs. Johnson expressed in a recent note: "I think of you all so often and of the good times we had in C. L. S. C. I suppose your club has begun and you are enjoying the meetings."

We have lost many dear ones who have gone into the life beyond. They helped sustain this club in grace and spirit and we were enriched by their companionship. One of our Members, Mrs. T. D. Karnes, is now very will at the hospital.

To our many new and younger members we say, "May your lives be so enriched that you will feel that your efforts have been repaid, and that a lasting and genuine pleasure will be the result of our association together.

There have been several mother and daughter members, but they were not always members at the same time:

Mrs. Emory Gregg Miss Gertrude Gregg

Mrs. E. S. Wilson Mrs. John Will McDowell

Mrs. J. J. Pence Mrs. C. A. Purdum

Mrs. L. B. Dominy Mrs. W. R. Bane

Mrs. Newton Fulton Miss Marjorie Fulton

Mrs. P. C. James Mrs. George Jensen

Mrs. A. P. Hamilton Mrs. E. F. Dickey

May mothers, daughters, and friends carry on this bond of mental improvement and pleasant social relations.

Anna M. Weber

CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE

AUGUST 1989 CONTINUING HISTORY

By Bernice Gregg

The club year of 1989 — 90 marks the 95th year of our continuous meetings as the Chatauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. It is fitting that we recall some of the highlights of our history.

Founded in November 1895, by fifteen very intelligent and ambitious Fairbury women just when the Chatauqua Movement was coming into its greatest glory as the most successful cultural force in the country. Our founders were greatly impressed by what the national organization could offer. Its ability to provide printed courses and books for group study appealed to our founders. National Chatauqua offered diplomas and degrees to those who could pass the examinations. On the material sent. Our members studied the courses with great zeal and several even went to Chatauqua Lake, New York, National headquarters, to receive their awards. We ceased buying their books about 1960.

Along with the serious educational efforts, members were never "stuffy." There was always good fun and wonderful fellowship.

When a list of all the members who have belonged to our group has been compiled, we will realize how many have died, or moved from our community, or who have resigned for reasons of health or some other serious situation.

It is interesting to note that because of our high standards of citizenship and personality, our membership has been very stable. Through the years we have had a number of mothers and daughters belonging and into the 3rd generation, and now the 4th. We are especially proud of our continuity.

As long as there is a Fairbury, we hope C. L. S. C. will be going strong.

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT HAD A LESSON

By Rev. Michael Hilyer, Pontiac Bible Church

As I investigated what the Chautauqua movement was about, I was pleasantly surprised to find it's roots firmly based in the American Sunday School Movement.

This educational movement with its national impact came about as the result of the Sunday School Union's need for qualified Sunday School teachers.

The Rev. John H. Vincent, a Methodist minister, came up with the idea of incorporating biblical training with a family vacation.

This first training session/outing was held at Lake Chautauqua, New York. It began on August 4, 1874, and lasted for two weeks.

The entire family camped out and attended training sessions. They included practical exhibits, specimens of typical Sunday School meetings, and a huge contour map of Palestine which was laid out by the lakeside. As the movement grew over the following years, Greek and Hebrew were added to the courses offered.

In 1878 Vincent formed the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle to provide a means for people to improve not only their religious education but also their skills in secular fields. The required reading for the first year included Green's Short History of English People, Mahaffey's Old Greek Life, Brooke's Primer of English Literature, two books on the Bible, one on astronomy and one on physiology, plus study guides for each one.

Then the Chautauqua Movement expanded to include cultural events such as musicals and plays and lectures by prominent men of the day. The schedule for a Chautauqua in August 1904 included: a speech by Secretary of War Taft, Handel's "Messiah", a sermon and devotional series by Bishop J. H. Vincent, "Cinderella," a children's operetta, Recognition Day, and a special Grange Day for farmers.

This movement was particularly popular in the Midwest. Chautauqua organizations sprung up in almost every major community. Our own community had the Pontiac Chautauqua Association. Our city's main park's name was changed from Riverside to Chautauqua. Pontiac's Chautauqua Association was responsible for bringing speakers such as presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan to Pontiac first in 1896 and then back for three other lectures. It had a tremendous influence on our community's and nation's development.

CHAUTAUQUAS ONCE DREW THOUSANDS

By Barbara Sanken

The Daily Leader (October 25, 1991)

DAILY LEADER

For more than 30 years, from 1898 to 1917 and 1919 to 1929 Pontiac was the site of one of the most exciting and comprehensive Chautauqua assemblies in the United States.

Thousands of people made their way each year to Riverside Park for spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical improvement.

The first Chautauqua was held in 1874 on Lake Chautauqua in New York. It was a Pontiac school teacher, Barbara Replogle, who first envisioned that this great assembly could be duplicated here.

She described a then-available site to a friend, William Stone of Chicago, who as a professional manager and promoter of Chautauquas, and convinced him to visit the park, originally known as Buck's pasture.

Stone found the 20-acre site even more appropriate than he had anticipated and a meeting was called to form a stockholding company to raise funds to get the project rolling. A surveying group marked the ground in Riverside Park for roads and building plots, and other crews cleared the underbrush. Plans for an auditorium were drafted and carpenters laid the foundation and rafters. Work on the site continued through the winter and spring of 1898.

By opening day, July 29, 1898, avenues for tents had been laid out, the north side of the park had been fenced in and an impressive gate and ticket office had been built at the entrance.

The promoters successfully organized both publicity and public relations. Three railroads reduced rates for visitors traveling to and from Pontiac for the assembly entertainment and a Chicago firm sent more than 200 12-foot by 14-foot wall tents and equipment.

Pontiac gave itself up wholly to the occasion, with all business houses closing during the afternoon when the assembly began its two-week program. By 1899, the little city by the river had grown to 400 tents and had laws to govern itself. Soon the auditorium built for 2,000 had to be enlarged to hold more than 4,500.

Religious and educational programs were part of the assemblies from the beginning but gradually fun and general entertainment were added.

A typical day started at mid-morning with everyone gathering in the auditorium for an hour of singing, sermons, devotions or elocution. Around 11 a.m. groups went swimming, boating or canoeing before the noon meal, which was followed by informal entertainment, such as an orchestra, lectures about homemaking, acts by professional road troupes or discussions of practical crafts.

At mid-afternoon, people gathered to hear addresses by featured speakers, informal talks on physical education in the home or short presentations on furniture repair. After the evening meal, the same programs that highlighted the afternoon would be repeated only with different performances. In later years, phonograph concerts were in demand along with rides around Pontiac in the "horseless carriages." A devotional service at 9 or

10 p.m. concluded the day.

Among the famed and noted of the day who appeared at Pontiac Chautauquas were Billy Sunday, William Jennings Bryan, Booker T. Washington, John Philip Sousa's band, and Samuel Gompers.

DE'JA' VU

By Cynthia Crossen

July 7, 2004 Wall Street Journal

BEFORE RADIO, CITIZENRY GOT CULTURE, POLITICS

FROM TRAVELING TROUPES

Summer vacation used to be an oxymoron.

Until the 20th century, most Americans were farmers, and farm families worked from sunup to sundown—or longer—during the summer. Only the rich could "tour": Travel was expensive and arduous. And because few people owned radios or phonographs, they rarely heard music or other entertainment. So when the traveling chautauqua came to town, most people who lived in mud-road isolation dug deep in their pockets for the price of a ticket.

Named after the original Chautauqua in southwestern New York, the circuit troupes pitched their tents in tiny towns across America's heartland. For the decades between 1904 and 1930, the chautauqua was a kind of respectable circus, a "poor man's college." It offered not leisure, which was still a sinister and impractical concept for most Americans, but self-improvement. Shops closed, women brought their knitting and babies, and the front benches were reserved for the elderly and deaf.

For about a week, in morning, afternoon and evening sessions, the traveling lecturers, singers, and players offered a heady combination of inspiration, pedantry, impersonation and debate. Jacob Rils lectured about slums. Frederick Cook and Robert Peary presented their competing North Pole claims. Robert LaFollette, the impassioned senator from Wisconsin, preached progressivism and denounced the Washington fat cats, particularly Joseph "Tsar" Cannon, then speaker of the House of Representatives.

But LaFollette was legendary on the circuit for the length of his talks. After one four-hour speech, an observer noted, "The first two hours, the farmers wanted to rush to Washington and shoot Joe Cannon. After that they wanted to shoot LaFollette.

Who could blame them? The chautauqua tents were stifling, and not impervious to rain or, sometimes fatally, tornadoes. The plank benches were hard and often backless, and the muggy air hummed with mosquitoes. The speakers had no microphones and spoke or sand over crying babies, barking dogs and hooting trains. Yet day after day, year after year, the tents overflowed with paying customers. "Good crops mean good chautauqua," people said.

From the beginning, music was a big draw. There were quartets, quintets, sextets and the 10-man singing band, the White Hussars, dressed as male majorettes. Bell ringers were always a big hit, as were Daddy Groebecker's Swiss Yodelers in authentic lederhosen.

One performer played "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" four ways: as a hymn, a march, a dirge, and a ragtime piece. He called himself Bill Johnson and His One Tune.

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Inspirational lectures, referred to by circuit managers as "Mother, Home and Heaven" numbers, were also de rigueur on the chautauqua circuit. People wanted uplift. One of the most acclaimed lectures was called "Take the Sunny Side"; another was "The Peptomist: an Optimist in Action." A white man who claimed to have been raised by Indians gave a talk called "Things I Saw and Did as a Savage."

Perhaps the most popular lecture of the period was Russell Conwell's two-hour talk, "Acres of Diamonds," in which he told his audience, "You have no right to be poor." Conwell delivered this lecture some 6,000 times.

Every great political and social issue of the day was debated on chautauqua platforms—suffrage, temperance, prisons, poverty, taxes, elections and wars. The audiences of the period took their government seriously: One of the most popular chautauqua speeches was "Responsibilities of the American Citizen." William Jennings Bryan was the most famous, and best loved, of the circuit speakers, speaking plain talk to plain people, praising God and denouncing scientists. "Words flow from Bryan's lips like water over Niagara," wrote an Iowa editor.

Initially the chautauquas steered clear of theater, still considered by most Midwestern Americans to be a den of cosmopolitan iniquity. But gradually, readings and impersonations evolved into skits, and skits became dramas. In 1913, a company called the Shakespeare Players went on the road with "Comedy- of Errors," and even in the Baptist South, audiences were delighted. That paved the way for modern drama, complete with costumes and makeup, but scripts were bowdlerized to make them "hound's-tooth clean," wrote Harry Harrison in his 1958 memoir, "Culture Under Canvas."

Later, Mrs. M. C. Hutchinson single-handedly staged "The Importance of Being Earnest." "She astounded the audience by changing her voice, making love to herself, breaking in as a great blustering villain, resuming as a mild shrinking maid and then taking her bow alone on behalf of the entire cast," reported an admirer.

Before radio, cars and movies put an end to chautauquas, they had touched some 20 million Americans. Their greatest contribution, wrote Victoria and Robert Case in their 1948 book, "We Called It Culture," was awakening rural America to a consciousness of the part they were both entitled and expected to play in the affairs of the nation and the world.